

For one, the people of Ukraine need our immediate help, and this omnibus is the quickest and most direct way of getting them the help fast. At nearly \$14 billion, Congress will approve more than double—more than double—what the administration originally requested for Ukraine aid, and that is a huge accomplishment. We took the President's original request for Ukrainian aid, examined it and added to it.

I can confidently say every last penny of this aid package will be much needed and well spent. It will provide food, medicine, shelter, and support for over 2 million refugees and resources for Ukraine's ruined economy. It will also inject billions into military assistance. It will enable weapons transfers like Javelins and Stingers. It will reassure and strengthen NATO and add teeth to our defenses against Russia's malicious cyber warfare.

And to every corrupt Russian oligarch who has dined off Putin's regime for years, beware. This package will increase the government's tools for hunting you down and holding you accountable.

The Ukrainian people are fighting for their lives and fighting for the survival of their young democracy. Congress has a moral obligation to stand behind them as they resist the evils of Vladimir Putin and his campaign of carnage.

The 2022 government funding bill is one way we are keeping that promise, and for that reason alone, it should pass the Senate as quickly as possible.

But on the homefront, as I already mentioned, there are lots of important things. This package increases investments across nearly every single domestic priority, very much needed.

I am particularly thrilled to say that, after a decade of false starts, this package will finally reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, which I originally helped write and pass when I was a Congressman back in 1994. Unfortunately, this very needed, important bill to protect those who are abused has languished in limbo for far too long. VAWA is one of the most important pieces of legislation of the past 30 years, and once it is reauthorized, it will once again provide lifesaving support for countless women who face sexual assault and domestic abuse. I thank Senators FEINSTEIN, DURBIN, ERNST, MURKOWSKI, and all the cosponsors—bipartisan—for helping to bring this law back to life.

Now, of course, nobody argues that this package is perfect. I am deeply disappointed—deeply disappointed—that the administration's request for more COVID funding failed to make it into the House bill, but we are going to keep fighting to make sure we get that money approved as soon as possible.

COVID funding right now is all about being prepared. It will provide funding for vaccines and therapeutics and testing, which means it will be much easier to keep schools open, to keep businesses open, and to keep life closer to normal than it was during Delta and

Omicron. So we will keep working on COVID relief. It is very much needed.

Now, we are not over the finish line yet, but I want to thank appropriators from both sides of the aisle—bipartisan—for putting this package together, never an easy task. I especially thank Chairman LEAHY for his leadership and his counsel over the course of this process, and I thank Ranking Member SHELBY as well, and my House colleagues, too, for working in good faith to make this bill possible.

It has not been easy to draft this truly robust package, but after years of needless chaos and uncertainty under Donald Trump, this year Congress has been able to work together on a bipartisan basis to fund the government in a serious way. Now the Senate must follow through in finishing the job by approving this bill quickly and sending it to the President's desk.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, so we still have some more work to do, but it has already been a remarkably busy and productive week here in the Senate.

After nearly a decade of work, this week the Senate finally passed the largest postal reform bill in a very long time, with huge bipartisan support. I am happy to say. We also sent to the President's desk the first bill in American history that finally, finally—long overdue—declares lynching a Federal crime after a century of failed attempts. These are both momentous and indeed historic accomplishments, and I thank my colleagues for working in good faith to get them done.

I have always said that, whenever possible, Democrats would be willing to work in a bipartisan way to get things done, and, once the omnibus is done, in this week we will have achieved three major bipartisan accomplishments.

Yesterday, Senate Democrats also met for our DPCC retreat over at Howard University, where we had a spirited and productive conversation about the biggest issues facing American families: lowering costs. As the world continues to struggle with COVID, supply chain disruptions, and Russia's war on Ukraine, Americans need relief—relief on everything from energy costs, prescription drug costs, the cost of groceries and meat and so much more. Democrats will keep working these issues with laser-like intensity and unflinching focus.

Moving forward, the Senate will also continue the process of considering and, ultimately, confirming President Biden's exceptional nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court: Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson. That Judge Jackson is qualified for the High Court is not in question. That she merits bipartisan support should not be disputed, because on three occasions she has already come before this Chamber and has been embraced by people on both sides of the aisle.

When Judge Jackson's confirmation hearings begin on March 21, the entire Nation will get to see what many of us in the Senate are learning for ourselves: Judge Jackson is brilliant, she is beloved, and she belongs on the Supreme Court. The three b's: brilliant, beloved, belongs.

We have more work to do before this week comes to an end, but, for now, I thank my colleagues for a very, very productive few days.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

COSTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, Washington Democrats are trying to pull off a political spin job for the ages. Everyone knows that gas prices and energy costs have been soaring sharply for many, many months. Working families know all too well that gas prices and utility costs have been rising throughout President Biden's tenure.

Just this morning, we learned that inflation set yet another modern record last month. Prices skyrocketed another 0.8 percent in February alone. That comes out to 7.9 percent inflation year on year, the worst inflation in 40 years. And it keeps getting worse, not better.

This has been a painful pattern throughout President Biden's tenure. We have now had 9 straight months of inflation higher than 5 percent. And remember, 3 weeks ago, before the crisis in Europe, Democrats were already in a political panic over gas prices and desperately talking about a gas tax holiday. Three weeks ago, before the crisis in Europe, the average price of a gallon of gas had already shot up more than a dollar from when President Biden was sworn in.

Now, you would think the Democrats would have been proud of this. Hostility to fossil fuels and homegrown American energy is precisely what President Biden campaigned on. Here is what our President said on the campaign trail in 2020—a direct quote:

No more subsidies for the fossil fuel industry. No more drilling on Federal lands. No more drilling, including offshore. No ability for the oil industry to continue to drill, period. [It] ends.

That was the President in 2020. Here is what he told an activist:

[L]ook at my eyes. I guarantee you . . . we are going to end—

End—
fossil fuel.

Now, President Biden spent 2 years campaigning on hostility to American energy. Now he has spent 14 months putting that hostility right into action, and Democrats' reckless spending that has fueled across-the-board inflation has made Americans' pain at the pump even worse.

But in the last few days, the Biden administration has tried to invent some laugh-out-loud—laugh-out-loud—revisionist history. They are trying to rebrand the entire increase in gas prices on their watch—listen to this—as an effect of Putin's recent invasion of Ukraine. So they want to blame 14 months of gas price increases on the last 2 weeks of turmoil.

Washington Democrats' war on domestic energy long, long predates Putin's war on Ukraine. So let me say that again. Democrats' war on domestic energy long predates Putin's war on Ukraine.

Now, I strongly support America stopping our purchases of Putin's oil, but Democrats' 14-month war on our own production will make that necessary action more painful for American families than it had to be. If the Biden administration had spent 14 months promoting American energy instead of attacking our production and fueling inflation, we would be better positioned to push back on Putin at a less painful cost to American families.

The President's team wants to pretend this lengthy problem only started 2 weeks ago, but American families have been paying for Democrats' bad policies for a lot longer than that.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, yesterday, the House passed a bipartisan, bicameral government funding agreement that will enable crucial investments in our national defense. Putin's war on Ukraine is just one manifestation of the major long-term threats to American security and American interests posed by major competing powers like Russia and China.

So, absolutely, we must rapidly fund the urgent assistance that Ukraine and our allies along NATO's eastern flank need right now, but we must also make the investments in military modernization that will equip America to achieve peace through strength for years and decades to come.

Our military commanders have clearly and consistently told us they cannot rebuild and modernize our military to meet the growing threats if Congress lets defense funding sleepwalk from one continuing resolution to another. The world is a dangerous place. It is growing more dangerous every day. The road to peace runs through American power. We all know it is true, so we have to budget accordingly.

Our recent negotiations put us Republicans in the surreal position of having to push a Commander in Chief's party into giving his own commanders the funding they need. But, over many Democrats' objections, Republicans made sure this deal gets the job done for our Armed Forces.

The compromise product provides significantly more money than the Biden administration had requested for defense and significantly less than they requested for nondefense.

Until 24 hours ago, this compromise was also going to reprogram money away from Democrats' wasteful spending spree that neglected COVID needs and reallocate it to vaccines and treatment for the American people, but House Democrats mutinied against Speaker PELOSI. The far left would rather preserve State and local bureaucrats' giant slush funds than fund vaccines and therapeutics for our citizens, so the COVID component has fallen out.

Overall, this agreement checks the three boxes I laid out months ago. The bill maintains parity between defense and nondefense spending growth. It maintains longstanding bipartisan policies, such as protecting taxpayers against funding abortions and being politically targeted by the IRS. And new far-left poison pills were cut out. But more urgently, amidst this war in Europe, this agreement delivers aid the Ukrainians need right now and a downpayment on our commitment to keep defending America and global peace in the years to come.

UKRAINE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on one final matter, over the last few days, the Biden administration's confusing mismanagement and mixed signals surrounding the Ukraine crisis and the West's response have again spilled out into open public view.

Here is the pattern. Time and time again throughout this crisis and in the months preceding it, the administration's first instinct has been to resist strong and decisive steps. The President and his team initially take a pass on strong steps when they could have been put into place proactively and had a real deterrent effect, but then, after sustained public pressure, they buckle and implement the steps anyway, often too late. This "leading from behind" leaves us in a lose-lose scenario.

The pattern has played out yet again with this bizarre argument over MiG airplanes that President Biden's team has carried out in public with our Polish allies.

The mere fact that Biden administration officials are contradicting not only each other but also our NATO allies in public like this evidences a severe lack of the coordination and proactive leadership that we should be—us, Americans—should be providing. This isn't limited to just these Polish planes; there are all manner of

different systems, tools, and arms that our eastern flank allies and partners could be providing more readily to the brave Ukrainians. This would take American leadership and coordination and an American commitment that we will help them replace their Soviet-era stocks with American and Western military technology.

The loan guarantees we included in the supplemental appropriations bill will give the administration a tool to do just this—help eastern flank NATO partners use their own money to modernize their defensive capabilities. This would be a win for Ukraine, a win for us, and a win for NATO.

These kinds of steps should be no-brainers for a confident, assertive, and decisive American administration. Instead, it repeatedly seems like the administration's first instinct is to flinch—to flinch—wait for international and public pressure to overwhelm them, and then take action only after the most opportune moment has nearly passed us by.

Nobody wants an escalation, but if the administration keeps repeating this pattern of self-deterrence, of convincing itself that any proactive step would be irresponsible, they are just internalizing Putin's false premise and amplifying Putin's false equivalence.

Remember this: Strength is not a provocation. The world needs President Biden and his team to be leading, taking the initiative, and shaping circumstances calmly, soberly, but with confidence and decisiveness. They seem to be trapped in a cycle of passivity, indecision, self-deterrence, and then, finally, reaction. The world needs the Biden administration to be flying this plane. Too often, it feels like the plane is flying them.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RUSSIA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it is interesting to listen to the reaction to the notion that we are going to stop our dependence on Russian oil. I totally support that. The notion that I would buy gasoline in my hometown and put it in my car or truck and somehow subsidize what Vladimir Putin is doing in the rape of Ukraine is just unacceptable. I believe there is not only a moral force but a political force behind this. Morally, there is no way we are going to support Putin. Politically, we have to come together with other nations and make this as painful as possible on him, and stopping the import of Russian oil is a move in that direction.